

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. HÜSEYİN ÖZGÜRGÜN, THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS**

On 28th of September 2010, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution on protection of cultural and religious heritage in North Cyprus, containing false allegations against Turkey. It is very clear that this resolution which contains the well-known Greek Cypriot allegations as regards the very issue of Cyprus problem as well as the so-called destruction of religious and cultural heritage in the North, was drafted by the Greek /Greek Cypriot lobby and their supporters at the Congress. It is unfortunate to see that the U.S. House of Representatives made no effort to question the content of the text or to adopt a balanced approach prior to passing this resolution. This decision will not only cast a shadow on the impartiality of the U.S. House of Representatives but would also negatively affect the spirit of reconciliation and efforts for a solution in the Island.

It is well known that there is a political issue in the island and that the negotiations in order to achieve a comprehensive settlement under the U.N. umbrella are continuing. Moreover, Turkey's support to the ongoing negotiations for reaching a just and lasting solution to the Cyprus issue has already been praised by the international community including the UN. Besides, it is an undeniable fact that the military presence of Turkey, which is based on its rights and obligations arising from the 1960 international treaties, is a vital security requirement for the Turkish Cypriot people. In this connection, we would like to remind all the relevant authorities that, as it is the case for any issue related with North Cyprus, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is the only sovereign administration responsible for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage and for guaranteeing religious freedoms.

Contrary to the allegations contained in this latest resolution of the U.S. House of Representatives, the relevant TRNC authorities are taking all the necessary steps, without any discrimination, in order to preserve and protect the historical and religious sites and artifacts that are the common heritage of the humanity. Above all, our efforts for restoration and preservation of the Christian religious and historical sites in the North are very well known by the U.S. authorities on the island. In view of the embargoes

imposed upon and the Greek Cypriot blockage of any international aid to be given to the TRNC, the Turkish Cypriot side's efforts for protection and preservation of the cultural heritage should be appreciated rather than be subject of accusations, particularly accusations against the Motherland Turkey, which is surely not the party to the case.

In view of the political issue in Cyprus, it is very natural to show sensitivity to the preservation of the religious and cultural heritage in the Island. However, it is very unacceptable for the House of Representative to be concerned merely about the situation of the Christian sites and artifacts in the North and hence become an instrument to these intentional distortions. Furthermore, there are also Turkish/Muslim religious as well as historical sites and artifacts both in North and South and it is a very biased approach of the US House of Representative not to pay any attention to such sites or artifacts in South which are either abandoned to perish or in a very grave state.

Moreover, the said decision of the U.S. House of Representatives disregards the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage which was established by the agreement between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders on 21 March 2008 and has since then been intensely working. It is apparent that the said Committee, which is successfully conducting its activities regarding the restoration of historic and religious sites in cooperation with the competent authorities from both sides in the Island, is the only platform for taking up such issues. Therefore, the Greek Cypriot attempts to produce a biased decision on cultural heritage in the U.S. House of Representatives, is a clear indication of its insincerity. Furthermore, the partial intervention of the U.S. House of Representatives to the successful work being carried out by the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage which is conducted without any political interference up until today, is disrupting the spirit of cooperation established through delicate balance between the two sides, and also creating a condition for impasse by letting it be politicized.

The said resolution also contains implausible allegations regarding the living conditions of the Greek, Maronite and Armenian communities in North Cyprus. The credit given by the U.S. House of Representatives to these hideous claims raised by the Greek Cypriot/Greek lobby can only be interpreted as their lack of knowledge and

experience about the situation in Cyprus. Just as any other TRNC citizen, the Greek, Maronite and Armenian communities living in North Cyprus are benefiting from every service and facilities provided by our State and utilize all their rights and freedoms without any impediment and restriction; moreover their living conditions are far better than the one of Turkish Cypriots living in South. Despite the regular reports published by the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces in Cyprus which expresses affirmative view regarding the living conditions of the Greeks and Maronites in North Cyprus, it is upsetting to see that the U.S. House of Representatives has disregarded this and chosen to become part of the propaganda activities of the Greek Cypriot side being carried out solely for political gains.

In the future, we expect the US House of Representatives to take into consideration during its deliberations the fact that there are two sides in the Island and not let the interference of the Greek Cypriot/Greek lobby to affect its decisions in a biased way.

Lefkoşa
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